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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND
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Agenda item 3

Draft report

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:

UNITED NATIONS REFORM: MEASURES AND PROPOSALS (item 2 (b))

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 2 (a))

Section 22. Human rights

1. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee considered section 22, Human rights, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

2. Several delegations strongly expressed the view that there was no mandate to proceed with the integration/consolidation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights into one single office. They considered that such consolidation should not be undertaken before the General Assembly had reviewed the issue and taken a decision thereon.

3. Other delegations expressed strong support for the integration/consolidation of the two offices, considering that it would result in improved conditions, better use of resources and more efficient implementation of the programme of activities. This restructuring represents a welcome step in the process of empowering the United Nations human rights mechanisms to accomplish

the mandates adopted by Member States in combating human rights violations throughout the world.

4. Some delegations considered that the statement in the first sentence of paragraph 22.2 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303) did not adequately reflect the mandate adopted by Member States in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,[1] subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly on human rights and the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[2] Those delegations were of the view that the statement should have referred to the need to ensure that the full range of human rights, including in particular the right to development, was given appropriate attention, and that the issue of human rights was not used conditionally or selectively. They underlined that human rights integrated into the broad range of activities of the Organization was not acceptable. Other delegations expressed support for the wording of paragraph 22.2. Many delegations considered that the issue of development was the most appropriate to be integrated fully as a cross-sectoral issue in all the activities of the Organization.

5. Several delegations questioned the working relationship of the High Commissioner with the Departments mentioned in paragraph 22.4 and the reference to "human rights components of early warning mechanisms". They considered that there was no mandate for such reference since there was no agreement among Member States on the issue of "early warning mechanisms" and requested the deletion of the paragraph.

6. Some delegations observed that there was no legislative basis for paragraphs 22.2 and 22.4. It was pointed out that the medium-term plan did not contain any element that supported the provisions of those two paragraphs. Those delegations expressed the view that, owing to the absence of a legislative basis, paragraphs 22.2 and 22.4 should be deleted from the text.

7. Some delegations stated that the proposed reclassification of a P-5 post in the Office of the High Commissioner to the D-level was not adequately justified.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on a recommendation to the General Assembly that it approve the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in section 22, Human rights. It therefore recommended to the Assembly that, when considering the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, it review the programme narrative of section 22, paying due attention to the observations made in paragraphs 2 to 7 above.

Notes

[1] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[2] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6 and corrigendum (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1).